



NEWS

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INTERACTIVE VOICE RESPONSE ACCESSIBILITY FORUM ANNOUNCED

Washington, DC – The Alliance for Telecommunications Industry Solutions (ATIS) will host the next meeting of the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) Accessibility Forum on October 9, 2002. The meeting will be held at the ATIS Conference Center, 1200 G St., NW, Suite 500, Washington, DC.

During the forum, consumer and telecommunications industry participants will meet to review and discuss potential accessibility and usability solutions for voice-mail and other interactive voice response systems and services.

Section 255 of the 1996 Telecommunications Act requires manufacturers of telecommunications equipment and customer premises equipment to ensure their equipment is designed, developed and fabricated to be accessible to, and usable by, individuals with disabilities, if readily achievable. The IVR Forum supports the goals of Section 255.

The FCC encourages consumer groups, telecommunications manufacturers, assistive technology (AT) manufacturers, and service providers to participate in the IVR Forum.

K. Dane Snowden, chief of the FCC Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau said, "Although the underlying objective of implementing an IVR system is to streamline the call process for everyone, it often excludes people with disabilities. The IVR Forum is working to ensure that everyone can take advantage of telecom improvements."

The IVR Forum will:

1. Identify features that could make IVRs easier to use by people with disabilities.
2. Identify issues to present to standards organizations and appropriate entities for further solution development.
3. Create a common resource of potential solutions to use for developing new products and enhancements to existing products.

4. Identify and evaluate emerging technologies that will have an impact on IVRs and provide guidance to stakeholders about how to address accessibility issues.
5. Involve consumers, government entities, telecommunications manufacturers, assistive technology (AT) manufacturers, service providers, and other interested parties in the identification of accessible solutions.
6. Provide industry, consumers and government entities with educational and informational resources, including those highlighting the benefits of making IVRs more accessible, usable, and compliant with relevant regulations.

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